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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

Note verbale dated 27 March 2002 from the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the secretariat of the Commission on Human Rights and has the honour to request the circulation of the attached* information as an official document of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission under agenda item 9, "Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world".

* Reproduced as received, in English only.

Annex

10 YEARS OF MARAGHA MASSACRE (Armenian village in Mardakert region of Nagorno Karabagh)

10 years passed since Maragha tragedy -the hell which remains only as a horrible memory, victims of which have lost everything - lives, families, homes, motherland and...belief.

"The name of this village is associated with a massacre which never reached the world's headlines.."[1].The 10th of April 1992 for Maragha inhabitants became the last day of their lives. The innocent population of this Armenian village of the Mardakert region of Nagorno Kharabakh was slaughtered by Azeri army and forgotten.

In chain of tragic events related to the Karabakh conflict the Maragha atrocities take a special place both by the brutality in relation to civilians, the number of people, massacred and by the aftermath which those events led to.

The Geneva-based Christian Solidarity Worldwide human rights group witnessed the massacre of the Armenians in Maragha (Maraghar). This bloodbath was perpetrated by Azeri neo-fascist paramilitaries and witnessed by Baroness Cox, who is also the Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords of the British Parliament. She testifies:

"On April 10, 1992, forces from Azerbaijan attacked the Armenian village of Maraghar in northeastern Karabakh. The villagers awoke at 7 a.m. to the sound of heavy shelling; then tanks rolled in, followed by infantry and civilians with pick-up trucks to take home the pickings of the looting they knew would follow the eviction of the villagers. Azeri soldiers sawed off the heads of 45 villagers, burnt others, took 100 women and children away as hostages, looted and set fire to all the homes, and left with all the pickings from the looting. *I, along with my team from Christian Solidarity Worldwide, arrived within hours to find homes still smoldering, decapitated corpses, charred human remains, and survivors in shock. This was truly like a contemporary Golgotha many times over."* [2]

According to other sources 60 people had been massacred and 100 were missing, suffering a fate worse than death. Getting the permission of the survivors the photographs of the exhumed bodies were taken as an evidence of the massacre.

For the first time Maragha village has been attacked on 26th of February. On April 10, 1992, forces from Azerbaijan attacked the village of Maragha for the second time.

Brutality of the Maragha slaughter was unprecedented - even bodies of the victims were subjected to profane and vandalism by perpetrators. Despite the danger survivors of the massacre were brave enough to return to the village to bury the bodies of their family members on 22nd of April. Their courage did not save them from the next Azeri attack the OMON continued the elimination and slaughter unless the last Armenian left the village.

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[1] Helsinki Watch

[2] Article by Baroness Caroline Cox "Survivors of the Maraghar Massacre: It was Truly Like a Contemporary Golgotha Many Times Over," Christianity Today, April 27 1998, Vol. 42, No. 5, p 92. The original version of the article is available from the online edition of Christianity Today.

The ones who died immediately had better faith then many of those taken hostages. Maragha victims were murdered, their bodies were defragmentated, burnt and decapitated, smashed by the Azeri tanks. Hostages were sold to whomever they wanted and treated as if they were things. Some of them were treated by the Head of Mirbashir's prison as if they were dogs, Azeris did not let them stand up or speak, feeding them with the flesh of their own relatives. The phenomenon of this massacre was that the inhabitants of Maragha were showing resistance. The horrors of the 10th of April were not the end of the massacre. The Maragha survivors returned to their homes hoping that this was a tragic accident, not a planned genocide. Their courage didn't save them from the repeated massacre - on 22nd of April the Azeri OMON returned and "finished" the task, killing those who survived. But even after this the last survivors returned to Maragha to bury the bodies of their relatives.

The deportation of the Maragha's population was accompanied with the acts of violence and other forms of human rights violations. The massacre was committed by a concrete armed formation of the Azeri army, and it's not accidental that many of hostages happened to find themselves in houses of Interior, Defense Ministries and OMON officials - evidences are provided by eyewitnesses, exchanged or bailed out hostages.

According to the records of the victims more then 60 people were murdered only on 10th of April, half of them were women, 53 were deported and taken hostage 29 of them were murdered in hostage, in Azerbaijan. 26 hostages were returned, but taking into consideration that the Armenian population of Maragha has been attacked for several times, the number of hostages is counted as more than 70.

19 hostages held captive, most probably had been tortured to death. The village was greatly destroyed, *the population* was deported. Houses were pillaged and then most of them were burnt down.

9 children were returned to their families thanks to the efforts of Armenian side and some NGO-s from Azerbaijan. At present the survivors of Maragha genocide live in Armenia and Russia, mainly in Voronezh region.

The videotape on exhumation of bodies of Maragha victims demonstrates signs of tortures - they were profaned and disfigured after the death. Neither this tape nor the testimonies of victims were publicized or covered by the international media. Only some international human rights-related organizations such as Helsinki Watch, Amnesty International, and the Christian Solidarity Worldwide responded to the Maragha tragedy. All the appeals of the victims to the Human Rights Committee received no response.

A few survivors of the massacre are left without any kind of assistance. They live in poverty, without a shelter. There exists no possibility for them for their physiological and psychological rehabilitation.

The Maragha genocide was one of a dozen of massacres against the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh and other parts of the former Azerbaijani SSR. Similar mass executions, ethnic cleansing, deportations and massacres took place in the cities of Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad, Shushi (Shousha) as well as in the Armenian-populated villages of Getashen, Martunashen, Karin-Tak, Karachinar, Arakel, Buzluk, Horek (Talish), Manashid, Nidj, Berdadzor, Hin-Shen, Tas-Verst (Tzakhkadzor), Khandzk, Hin-Tagher, Dolanlar, Kichan, Kadjavan, Karing (Arpagyadouk), Togh, Shurnukh, and Znaberd (Aznabyurt; the last Armenian village in Nakhichevan).

According to the testimonies of Maragha survivors the actions of the Azeri authorities were well organized and executed, which means that the atrocities were planned in advance.

The massacre of Maragha remains unpunished, perpetrators are free, victims passed through the hell of captivity - forgotten and left to the mercy of fate.

International community should give its fair evaluation of brutality and unbelievable barbarous acts of violence committed against innocent Armenians who lived peacefully without suspecting that monsters and perpetrators would not miss their chance.

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